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ABSTRACT

Pierre Indian Learning Center is a residential Bureau of Indian Affairs grant school that serves Indian children in Grades 1-8 from 15 tribes in South Dakota, North Dakota, and Nebraska. Recently, the average enrollment of the school has been 165 students, referred by social service agencies or courts because of various family, social, learning, or behavioral problems. During 1989-91, the school pursued curriculum improvement by allowing the staff time and assistance to develop and implement a core curriculum. Fundamental to this process was a needs assessment in which the school board, staff, and community reached consensus on curriculum goals for the students. These goals were translated into measurable competencies for each grade level. Staff members developed scope and sequence charts for each curriculum area to illustrate the content and skills that they thought were essential for students. These "maps" were used to organize plans of study or competencies for each grade. During the second year, all staff members implemented the curriculum competencies. Monitoring and evaluation procedures included analysis of results of national normed tests pre- and post-core curriculum, yearly and quarterly plans for each class and student, daily and weekly lesson plans, computer-generated student profiles of competencies, and observation and guidance by a team of school personnel. (SV)

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COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM PAPER

by

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INTRODUCTION

During the last two years, 1989-91, one of the major goals of the Pierre Indian Learning Center for improving their school was the adaptation of a curriculum improvement process. This process involved the school board, tribal community members, dorm and academic staff members as well as all school administrators.

The purpose of this report was to review each phase of this process by discussing the results for each phase and make recommendations for further improvement. The four phases of this curriculum development process that were followed at Pierre Indian Learning Center were the following:

- I. Needs Assessment with the staff, community, and school board members
- II. The Development of a Core Curriculum by the staff
- III. The Implementation of the Core Curriculum by the staff
- IV. The Evaluation and Testing of the Core Curriculum by the staff

How each phase was implemented at Pierre Indian Learning Center will be described in the following text.

Description of Pierre Indian Learning Center

The Pierre Indian Learning Center is a Bureau of Indian Affairs Grant School. It is a 24-hour residential facility and elementary school (grades 1-8) that serves Indian children from 15 Indian Tribes in a three state area (South Dakota, North Dakota and Nebraska). The facility is capable of housing up to 250 students. However, because of the serious problems that the majority of our students have, we try to limit our enrollment to 180 students. The average enrollment over the past three years has been 165.

The majority of the students attending the Pierre Indian Learning Center are from broken homes, dysfunctional families, and some are homeless. These children are referred to the Center by social service agencies and some are court ordered. Because of the

social and/or family problems, language differences, learning disabilities, severe emotional/behavioral problems, and various other factors, these students have not been successful in tribal and public schools on the reservation. Currently, there is no other educational program in this area capable and/or willing to provide the the needed services to these students.

The Pierre Indian Learning Center employs 97 full time staff members in the following departments: administration, academic department, residential, food service, facilities management, health care. The Aberdeen Area Special Education Cooperative Service Unit is also part of the Pierre Indian Learning Center.

PHASE I NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Pierre Indian Learning Center conducted a community/staff needs assessment on December 18-19, 1989 with 84 people attending. The purpose of the assessment was to establish a school educational improvement plan.

The 84 people involved in the needs assessment were representatives of the dormitory staff, the academic staff, the support staff, the school board, and the local community of Pierre. The school board members attending represented the fifteen (15) Native American Tribes that send their children to Pierre Indian Learning Center. The following Tribes were represented: *Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Rosebud Sioux, Oglala Sioux, Cheyenne River Sioux, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, Santee Sioux of Nebraska, Standing Rock Sioux, Devils Lake Sioux, Three Affiliated Tribes, Yankton Sioux Tribe, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, and Flandreau-Santee Sioux.*

A group interview process was used in conducting the needs assessment. The purpose of the process was to encourage participation, discussion and networking among the different groups concerning educational needs of the students at Pierre Indian Learning Center. Participants were asked to focus on the educational needs of the students in all educational levels. The needs were discussed, categorized, and defined through a group process. Finally, a limited number of needs were agreed upon as essential needs of all Pierre Indian Learning Center students.

Because the people present represented many groups at the school and in the community, it was probable that the six needs selected by them would be the same six needs selected by the entire community. The six needs selected by all ten groups (84 participants) in the two day workshops will become the foundation for Pierre Indian Learning Center's Educational Improvement Plan. They were:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Life Skills | 4. Consistency |
| 2. Self Esteem | 5. Responsibility |
| 3. Culture | 6. Academic Quality |

All six needs were integrated into all Pierre Indian Learning Center's programs, residential and academic. All six needs established the tenets for writing the ***philosophy, mission and goals*** of the Pierre Indian Learning Center Education Improvement Plan. Based upon the six needs, the philosophy, mission statement and goal of Pierre Indian Learning Center were revised as follows:

PILC Philosophy Statement

Education is a lifelong sharing process which is vital to all people. It should draw from the past to help ensure the future. PILC will provide a cooperative program which encourages Native American students to grow to be responsible, caring individuals with realistic goals for success in a multi-cultured world. It will actively involve tribal, community and family members to create this positive learning environment that will prepare the students to be citizens, proud and knowledgeable of their culture, and prepared to face the future.

Mission Statement

Respect yourself, others and the environment.

Goals

1. Pierre Indian Learning Center students will have opportunities to develop self esteem by being involved in realistic problem solving situations so that each student will have the ability to solve problems.
2. Pierre Indian Learning Center students will participate in multi-tribal cultural experiences so that they can increase their cultural awareness and enhance their personal sense of identity.
3. Students at Pierre Indian Learning Center will be given the opportunity to assume responsibility through Student Council, extra curricular activities and socialization to enhance independence, self motivation, and leadership.
4. The students at Pierre Indian Learning Center will become involved in a life skills curriculum so that they will be able to succeed in the various environments they encounter.
5. The students at Pierre Indian Learning Center will participate in a holistic curriculum which will be developed to stimulate self discipline, problem solving, critical thinking skills, and academic excellence so that they can become successful.
6. The students at Pierre Indian Learning Center will learn consistency by experiencing it in all policies and program areas so that they can learn to plan and order their lives.

PHASE II DEVELOPMENT OF CORE CURRICULUM

The Pierre Indian Learning Center **Core Curriculum** was designed by the Pierre Indian Learning Center (PILC) staff and Board of Education to meet the needs of the Pierre Indian Learning Center students. Current student needs were identified by the community,

staff and board during the fall of 1989 by conducting a needs assessment. The results of this assessment were reviewed in Phase I of this report.

Test data from the California Achievement Test (CAT) and the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) for all grades were analyzed. Teachers studied the CAT and the SAT test objectives and the right response items to locate content and skills that were not taught successfully. After the test analysis was completed, teachers were asked to record their expectations of the students for every grade.

Literature selections about curriculum, Indian Education, and learning styles were reviewed by the staff. Some of this information helped the staff develop their curriculum plan.

Based upon the above research design, the Pierre Indian Learning Center staff designed their curriculum guides (***Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Computer Science, Music, Art, and Culture***) to include their definitions of each curriculum area. Also included were the goals all students will obtain in each curriculum area. Scope and sequence charts or outline of the major content and skills in sequential order were developed for each curriculum area and finally the measurable competencies for plans of study were written for each grade level.

The goals for each of the Curriculum Guides were the underlying tenets for the scope and sequence charts. They provided the blueprint for the entire curriculum.

Each category contained the major content and skills that students learned in a sequential manner. An example of a scope and sequence charts is in Appendix I.

The scope and sequence charts were used as outlines to develop measurable competencies. Competencies were developed for each grade and defined the content and skills that were taught at each grade level. Sequential competencies, that build critical thinking skills as well as content and skills, were written into the education plan for each grade.

It was expected that **75% of the students will achieve 75% of their respective competencies.** Students who needed additional help to achieve competencies received help through

Chapter I, special education, library, bilingual, the school counselor, speech/language therapist, and other support groups.

The intent of this core curriculum was to insure the teaching of basic skills and content at each grade level. Textbooks, materials and other resources were to be used as needed to teach competencies. Teaching materials were determined by the classroom teacher as the learning needs of the students were determined by the teacher.

PHASE III CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

The Pierre Indian Learning Center Core Curriculum was pilot tested during the first year of implementation. It was important that all staff members teach the competencies in the curriculum as they were written. Strict adherence to the written curriculum was necessary for the validity of the results.

All instruments for implementing the curriculum were developed by a faculty team before the implementation process began. Dates and deadlines were established for quarterly planning, lesson plans, and student tracking. Through the use of these instruments, the faculty pilot tested their core curriculum in the following manner.

Each faculty member documented the teaching of the competencies through **yearly** and **quarterly** management plans. They prepared weekly lesson and/or unit plans. Student progress was tracked through maintaining student profiles, evaluating student progress measuring students gains through the Stanford Test (Grades 4 & 8), and by testing what the students have learned (competencies) through teacher made tests.

All faculty members were assigned to four teams called the Pilot Implementation Team (PIT). Program directors and master teachers were assigned team leaders and functioned as facilitators and trainers for the four PIT crews.

Teams met monthly to plan their competencies, lesson plans, and help each other with student tracking. The team leaders of the

PIT met weekly with the principal to review lesson plans and the progress of the students.

PHASE IV TESTING AND EVALUATION

Evaluation and testing of the curriculum competencies as well as the performance of the faculty in implementing the curriculum was measured in the following ways:

- Pre/post analysis of national normed tests
- Yearly and quarterly management forms
- Lesson plans and unit plans
- Student tracking including profiles and testing
- Quality checking

The following section of this paper describes how each of these steps were used at Pierre Indian Learning Center to evaluate and test the pilot core curriculum.

Pre/Post Testing

The purpose of testing was to determine what the students learned from teaching the core curriculum. The results were used to improve the core curriculum and meet the learning needs of the students.

The pre/post testing of this core curriculum was used as a measure to determine the gains/losses achieved by the students during this school year. It was expected that 70% of the students will gain in their test scores if the core curriculum was implemented by all the staff in a consistent manner.

The post test results of each item (right responses) were used by the staff to revise their core curriculum. Analysis of the items in the post tests across the grades highlighted the strengths and weaknesses in the core curriculum.

The nationally normed pre/post tests were the Stanford Test administered in the fourth and eighth grades. It was selected in accordance with the state testing requirements.

Some type of pre and post tests was administered by the academic staff. Some tests were developed by the classroom teacher or bought from a textbook service or from a national testing bank. The long range goal for testing was that the PILC staff develop their own pre/post tests based upon the competencies in their core curriculum.

Year and Quarterly Management Forms

The year and quarterly management forms were planning documents for the teaching staff. The purpose of these forms was to provide a method for the staff to select the competencies they wish to teach during the entire school year. The competencies were chosen for the four quarters of the school year and served as an overall plan for the year. All staff members including specialists and special programs did at least one management plan per subject for the year.

Competencies numbers for the four quarters were to be recorded on the year planning form at the beginning of the school year. The following information provided directions for the planning process.

During orientation, team leaders appointed by the principal met with their respective grades to guide them in the selection of their competencies. An example of the process was the following:

1. Divide the total number of the competencies by 4 because there are four quarters in the school year.
2. Divide that number by the number of teaching weeks in a quarter. Allow time for testing days.
3. List the competencies selected by the teacher for each quarter. Choose the competencies in the order needed to meet the learning needs of the students.
4. Submit the plan to the principal. The secretarial staff will print out the competencies from the computer data and return hard copy to the teacher.

The first quarter competencies were copied from the computer master file into a computer first quarter file. This print out was returned to the teacher and sent to the school board, the dorm parents, the educational administration on each reservation and the BIA offices for information sharing and school accountability.

At the end of each quarter, the teaching staff updated their quarterly plan and submitted the changes to the principal on the same format. The staff was given time to accomplish this task with their unit team by having a one half day early out in November, January, March and May.

During the unit planning time, the staff prepared for the next quarter. Again, the competencies were copied from computer master file into the second quarter computer file. The competencies for each teacher were printed, returned to the teacher, and sent again to the school board, the dorm parents, the educational administration on each reservation and the BIA offices. The quarter plans provided an outline for the parent/teacher conferences held each quarter by the school.

Lesson Plans and Unit Plans

Lesson plans were a planning document to assist the staff in organizing what and how they will teach daily and weekly. The form was designed to code the competencies (content and skills to be taught), write the activities that were planned for teaching the competencies, tell what materials were used, and explain if, when, and how the competencies were tested. (Appendix II)

All members of the teaching staff, including special education, Chapter I, and bilingual teachers, prepared weekly lesson plans. These plans were submitted to the principal by 4:00 p.m. on Friday. The principal, with the appointed team members, reviewed the lesson plans and returned them to the teachers by 8:45 a.m. on Monday.

The principal's staff distributed copies of the classroom lesson plans to all special service programs. Special service programs' lesson plans were distributed to the classroom teachers. One copy from each classroom was retained for office

documentation. Teachers who needing assistance in revising their lesson plans received help from the unit facilitator.

Unit Plans

A unit plan was a planning document for teaching one or several of the competencies within a subject or across several subjects using themes. This approach was used with whole language instruction. The length of the class period was adjusted to cover several class periods and several subjects. The principal reviewed the Unit Plan and returned a copy to the teacher. Each competency taught in the Unit Plan was tested in some manner and recorded on the Student Profile.

Student Tracking

Student Tracking was the process of testing the competencies and recording the results. The purpose of Student Tracking was accountability to the students, the parents, and peer teachers.

A Student Profile for each quarter was compiled by making a computer file of the competencies selected for teaching each quarter. This file was made by copying the competencies from the master file. These competencies were transferred to a spreadsheet or a word processing file. A printed copy of this file was given to the teacher, special services, the students, the dorm staff and the school board.

A copy of the Student Profile was placed in a student file folder by the students, aides, or teachers. As the competencies were taught and tested for that quarter, the test papers or documentation of testing were placed in the folders of the students by the students or by the teachers. Dorm parents received these folders at report card visitation time. The folders became the means to measure the students progress during the quarter, semester and/or year.

Dorm parent and teacher visitations occurred the week of November 19 and the week of April 24. Schedules were determined by the unit teams, principal and dorm supervisor.

Teachers completed the spreadsheets per quarter per student and used them for documentation with the principal. Teachers kept one copy of the student profiles in their classroom for each quarter and gave one copy to the principal for documentation of curriculum progress.

This process was repeated each quarter of the school year. At the end of the school year, the list of completed competencies (Student Profile) for each student was passed to the next teacher.

One of the major goals of teachers was to involve each of their students in the learning process. Thus, it was important to trust and teach the students that they were responsible for what and how much they learned. It was recommended that the students become involved in filing their test papers, peer grading, and even recording the results. All three activities prepared the learner for adult life and responsibilities in the world of work. An example of **Student Profiles** is in Appendix III.

Grading

Students were graded on the successful completion of the competencies. Specific criteria were used to judge the degree of learning of the competencies by the students. The criteria included the following:

1. The passing of tests that test the degree of learning (95%)
2. The completion of homework assigned to learn specific competencies (5%)
3. Extra credit projects can be implemented at the teachers' discretion (5%)

Quality Checking

Quality checking was the process of accountability for the Implementation of the curriculum across the school. This was done monthly by the principal and/or assigned team called the **Pilot Implementation Team (PIT)**. This team was made up of teachers from the various grade levels (primary, intermediate, junior high).

Four items were to be checked during the quarterly unit meetings. The four items were: ***quarter plans, lesson plans, student profiles, and testing documentation***, for each student. A format for recording this information is included in Appendix IV.

After the observations were completed, the team leaders met with their PIT members to review the results and receive guidance for improvement.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

During the last two years, Pierre Indian Learning Center has implemented their goal of curriculum improvement by allowing the staff time and assistance to develop and implement a core curriculum. Fundamental to the development of this curriculum was the needs assessment with the school board, staff, and community. The needs assessment helped all the groups reach consensus on curriculum goals for the students. These goals were translated into measurable competencies for each grade level.

The staff developed maps or scope and sequence charts for each curriculum area to illustrate the content and skills they thought were essential for the students. These maps were used to organize the plans of study or competencies for each grade.

During the second year, all staff members implemented the curriculum competencies with their students. Teachers administrated pre/post tests as criterion reference tests as well as the required national normed tests. Both sets of resulting data were used to select proper competencies for the students. Teachers did class and individual yearly and quarterly plans for all their students. They wrote daily and weekly lesson plans. Finally they tested the competencies through some form of criterion reference testing.

Thus, the curriculum goals of the school are being achieved. Much has been completed in the last two years and much remains to be done.